

Interview with Mayor John Driggs

Recorded on July 23, 2012 concerning Mr. Driggs involvement with the restoration of the Rosson House on Heritage and Science Park, 113 N 6th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004

Interviewer is Thomas Walsh, Director of the Rosson House Museum

John: You were just asking questions and you have your notes so I'll just. . .

Tom: What we had talked about when we met last time in June were your first recollections of coming down to the house, your rode to being the mayor, how you had gotten into that position, and then you told us the fascinating story of the HUD grant that allowed us to (access?) the property. So that is where we are. So now what I need is you and the committee having taken over the property and starting to put the committee together and the people together to do the restoration and all that transpired with that.

John: Did I, so I really have not talked yet about the actual restoration process.

Tom: Correct. We had just finished off with the Nixon years and getting the HUD money in.

John: All of that. Well that is good, because that.. So, anyway. Tell me when we are ready.

Tom: We are good.

John: We are going now? We are going now. That is a good device. I should probably buy one of those myself.

1:20

What I remember is we. Did I tell you about getting a postcard from Tucson

Tom: Yes, with a picture on it.

John: With a picture, and then I got several others. And I blew those up and carried them around with one of those great big, what the advertising guys carry.

Tom: One of the big briefcases.

John: These were big pictures. I would. . . The first thing we did ... of course that occurred because there was an announcement in the paper with a picture of the house as it existed then. And that is when these other photos started to surface. And they were very important because they literally gave us the road map for our architects. And then... oh, did I tell you about going to the American Institute of Architects for help?

Tom: Yes. I think you mentioned that they were very instrumental in doing the plans.

John: All their volunteers came and they went literally over every inch of the house. Measured everything and completed a literal set of working plans as though they were going to build it from scratch. OK.

3:11

So it was time to actually have the symbolic ground breaking so to speak at the start of restoration or the start of construction. So we had a big event at midday one day and it was billed as a “nail pulling event” because we were going to have to start the demolition of all the extraneous construction both inside and outside the house since 1995. By that time, Mayor Margaret Hance had succeeded Tim Barrow, did I tell you that story,

Tom: About his being mayor, right.

John: about his one term? Did I tell you my prediction that charter government would probably fall by the wayside?

Tom: Yes, I think you did.

John: OK. So the day came for this event. There was a big crowd. There are photographs of this event, where Mayor Hance and I stood on the porch, the front porch of the Tovrea, the Rosson House. The city had made a special chromium crowbar for that event because we were going to symbolize a nail pulling. To start the demolition with that crowbar. Since I was presiding and the mayor was there. Well, she was presiding as she was the mayor. But when it came my turn to actually take the crowbar that she gave me and symbolically pull the first nail, after some word, I said and now everybody, Mayor Hance and I are going to go right around to the end of the porch and pull one off.

Laughter.

The whole crowd erupted in laughter. And then I realized exactly what I said?

Tom: How did the mayor react?

John: She was a red head, but she blushed, and so we had fun with that one. That started the demolition. For the next month, we literally took away all the extraneous construction and it took three of the largest dumpsters that the city could provide for all the extra construction. Taking off the. .

6:38

We had to start raising money for the restoration. I would go out to corporations and ask for money. I remember the first one I went to was Valley National Bank. My modus operandi was to go to the highest official I could at the bank. So I went to the vice chairman of the board, Wilson Barrett, at the time. Told him about it, and asked him if he would come and tour this facility with me. He did. I took him through the whole thing and then I asked him for a \$50,000 contribution. He came through. So I always started with Valley National Bank as my first prospect for any fundraising, but I have never before asked anybody for such a large amount, and that of course was in 1975.

Tom: Big money.

John: That was big money. That would be three times that or more now. Then the next company was Salt River Project. I brought the general manager out, Jack Feister (?spelling?). Toured him through the house and he said well I am going to go back and I am going to appoint a committee of the Salt River Project board of directors to come and see this. A few weeks later, it was a rainy winter day. I was glad that so many of this board committee were farmers, because we were slogging around in the mud. We toured the whole house, and then I took them over and showed them the Silva House. I asked them if they would make a \$50,000 contribution to help restore that facility. I had gone to Mayor Hance to ask her...

9:40

(John's phone rings.)

If I got SRP or some organization to literally use the house if I could give them a long-term lease for twenty years or for use as a facility or a museum, something. So that was my pitch to SRP. But there were four bungalows as you know, along the other side of the block. They said well lets see the others. So we showed them all these four bungalows that were build at the turn of the century. Then they said can we go back and see the Silva House? I had already decided to get my own company, Western Savings, to contribution \$50,000 to do that one and have it recognized with their. . .Western Savings, as having restored the house. I thought it might take \$100,000 to restore it. Whatever. But they all said can we have the Silva House and convert it into a museum? And I said, for \$50,000 yes. So that was how we started raising the money to restore those four bungalows.

I stepped ahead of myself a little bit, but as far the work on the Rosson House, I did a lot of that with some small contributions, and then I got Western Savings to contribute some cash on that. My brother Gary, who was president of Western Savings as the time, said, look I know you've got this big job, and so Western Savings will make some contributions whenever you need cash. I went around and got as much in-kind contributions as I could. I went around to contractors and borrow labor. I think I told you about what Sundt did?

Tom: No.

12:30

John: OK. The first thing I needed was a construction superintendent. Well a member of our Western Savings and Loan board at the time was Wilson Sundt who was the chairman of Sundt Construction. They were out of Tucson, and we had recently opened a branch of Western Savings in Tucson and we wanted a Tucson directory, so Wilson Sundt was on our board. After a board meeting one day I brought him into my office and showed him the pictures of the Rosson House which I had blown up and I said, Wilson, you are a contractor and I need some help. I am getting this whole thing started because the city has asked me to get it restored but they have not be able to appropriate a nickel and I need to do the work. So I need some help. And without hesitation he said I will tell you what I am going to do. I will contribute a construction superintendent. One of our top experts, for one year. And his pickup truck and a construction trailer for one year. That fellow's name was Chuck Forsythe (spelling?) and he was one of their main superintendents, but he needed one of the top carpenters, so he literally got one of the top carpenters at Sundt to be his laborer. To do all the work. It was the Western Saving money that literally paid the salary of this master carpenter for one year. His name was Jim Heiden

(spelling?) He was just great. So in that first year we just performed miracles of construction. Because I was spending all of my available time. I would literally come down to the Rosson House every working day and spend a little time just coordinating. And then I would go to... Because the electrical contractor, Cannon and Wendt. Did I mention that?

Tom: No.

15:19

John: I knew I had to get the electrical work done so I looked up one of the biggest contractors, Cannon and Wendt. I went to see Al Wendt, and told him about it. He said He was interested in history. So he said I will tell you what I am going to do. I will do all the electrical labor according to the plans and specs that the electrical engineers have done if you will provide the material. He gave me a list of all the material, so I went around to electrical supply houses and gathers up all of the materials. And I did the same thing with J. H. Welch, the plumbing company. I did that. But J.H. Welch who was an old established plumbing company in Phoenix, who I knew as a member of my Rotary Club, Rotary Club 100. I learned then that J. H. Welch had done the original plumbing in the house in 1985. Which was kind of incredible. I just bring general contractors down to the house and asking them if they would contribute some carpenters.

Tom: Did J. H. Welch have any original plans from the original?

John: They did not have the original plans but they could tell the original plumbing chase that was covered up by some panels up to the bathroom on the second floor. When they inspected that their name was on some of the materials.

Tom: Very good.

John: So that was kind of an ironic twist.

Tom: Were there any volunteers working at this time with the construction?

John: No. We really couldn't. The city building inspector wouldn't allow volunteers onto the job. The other thing about that, was that I literally handled all the cash disbursement out of my office at Western Savings. My secretary at the time, handled the whole job. The City of Phoenix just required me to notify the building inspector when we had to have the mandatory inspections. Other than that, I handled the whole job out my office with my secretary. So that is something that probably would not be possible today in the bureaucracy of the City of Phoenix, but at the time it was a purely private sector effort doing what the city asked me to do.

Tom: Good. So, a lot of the work on the bungalows as well as the Rosson House all going on at the same time?

18:35

John: Well, I really got ahead of myself talking about the bungalows. It was several years into the construction, and we were nearing the completion of the Rosson House before I really got into the bungalows. That is a little sequential thing that I have corrected.

I talked about Bob Frankenburger?

Tom: Yes.

John: and there was another architect and I have to go back and find his name in some of our old records, but the committee, the committee that the mayor appointed. Did I mention there were certain people on that that really worked hard. One of them was Edwa Osborne (spelling?) who was the wife at that time of a prominent doctor in Phoenix. She found on a trip to Philadelphia, she found a sink that matched a sink that had been given to me by the Grasso Family (spelling?) that we believe literally came from the Rosson House, and it matched it perfectly. There were two sinks in two of the bedrooms on the second floor. And the other person who worked very diligently was Kim Sterling who is still very active in community affairs. She spent a lot of time, and it was the Junior League that helped greatly during the whole process. Under the guidance of the State Historic Preservation Office and a person contracted by them, named Jim Garrison, and he now is the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Junior League came in and carefully removed wall paper from all of the rooms. They scrapped and got enough off so we could duplicate all of the wall paper in all of the rooms in the Rosson House. They sent them back to two manufactures of wallpaper in New York and had those designs created so that all the wall paper in the house is an exact replication of the original.

There were a lot of cases on the interior. At the top of the stairway to the second floor they had built a regular stairway, a second stairway up to the attic, which had several apartments in it, because of code; they had to have two stairways. Because that was added later when the house was converted to apartments. There is a whole list of the owners of the Rosson House which I believe you have, which can be recorded in any documentation. But one of the families was the Goldberg family. Chet Goldberg, who recently passed away, he was if not born in the house, his parents were living in the house at the time he was born and his baby carriage is still on display in the house.

Tom: Yes.

23:11

John: We had to reconstruct, or we had to tear down the stairway to the attic and replace it with the appropriate railings. I would go again to companies like Arizona Sash and Door and other companies like that to do specific woodwork restoration. I spent a lot of time for years doing that and still maintaining my job at Western Savings. All the hardware had to be removed and cleaned and in certain cases. Well in fact, in almost every case we had to literally duplicate and replicate pieces of hardware, doorknobs and latches for the screen doors. I can remember taking all of the hardware for the house. I did not want to ship it. So I took it all over in a motor home to California to a place where they cleaned up all the hardware and replicated door knobs and everything else we needed.

Tom: I thought there was another house here in Phoenix that was being taken down that had similar hardware.

John: That's correct. There was a house that was later somewhat restored and used as a restaurant. I believe it was on Second Avenue just north of Van Buren. That house, I can't remember if it is still standing or not. I will drive by and see.

Things like finding the transom that had the original red glass in it that was just piled up behind the coach house. Of course, we literally we had to tear down a single family residence that was right next to the house when we moved the coach house from vicinity of the Westward Ho Hotel on Fillmore and Central. Had I mentioned that?

Tom: Well I know the story anyway. I do not recall if you mentioned it or not.

John: Yes. It was the mother-in-law of Dick Valery, a local prominent attorney who owned that coach house. It was in the same period and it was located just cattycorner from the Westward Ho.

Tom: I believe you did mention that and there was some family connection to that.

26:26

John: Yes, because my brother-in-law was head. . . his construction company was right on Central and Fillmore and that coach house was right behind it.

Tom: When you tore down that, what was it, four apartments right behind that, there was a house with apartments, did you find anything remarkable there?

John: No there was nothing remarkable found when we tore down that single family house to relocate the couch house. The other issue with the committee at the time was what to do with the duplex, which was literally right behind the Stevens-Haustgen House. At one point my committee had voted to tear that one down because it was not original to the block but we thought better of it because it showed how downtown began to evolve with greater density when the city would allow a duplex in the 1920s to be built right behind a single family house on Adams Street. Which just shows you that they were allowing greater density in the downtown area.

Tom: When you say it was not original you just mean that it wasn't of the period.

John: It wasn't of the period. Another interesting thing relevant to the. . . What do we call the house right next to Silva?

Tom: Teeter.

John: The Teeter House, another very critical decision on that was the walls of that house were so bowed out that it wasn't safe to restore. In other words there was not way to restore that house. And my committee voted, well we will just have to tear that one down. But that would if we have that we would have eliminated that unique street scene on Adams Street with those four distinct houses with their distinct architectural designs. We wanted to save the street scene, so with the advice of some contractors and with the help of one. Again, the records will show who

that was. But he volunteered to come in and take huge beams and diagonally support the roof structure of the Teeter House on either side. And then we got some masonry contractors to come in and literally take the walls down brick by brick. They did it in sections while we were holding up the house. Then we had masons. We knew from early photographs, the Teeter House in the '70s was painted. We knew the original photos showed that it was the natural brick. So we literally took the walls of that house down from roof to footing and then we would turn the bricks around. It was a double brick wall. The masons literally turned the bricks around so we would not have to clean the paint off. So the Teeter House literally was rebuilt brick by brick with that double brick wall. Were you aware of that?

Tom: I was not.

John: That is really one of the great miracles of Heritage Square. That we went to that effort to hold the roof up, the whole house structure, and rebuild the walls, turn the bricks around, and make it look like it did in 1900.

32:00

Tom: You wonder if that is a different builder than the other four, or three houses out there in 1900.

John: Well we really don't know who built those, because everything was custom built in those houses. There was no such thing as tract houses in those days. But anyway, there is probably a lot more on the Rosson House. The sink, for example, the sink in the kitchen, we literally found behind one of the abandoned structures on the lot. And we knew from the way it fit into the house, into the kitchen, and from the date it had been literally manufactured, when the sink was made, it had a permanent date on it, so we knew we had found the original sink. It had been preserved all those years in a pile of junk behind one of the buildings.

Tom: Yeah.

John: It was very exciting. Some of the windows were not original, but we wanted it to have that original sort of wavy glass look in all the windows. So I located some old houses in South Phoenix that had windows from that turn of the century period. And we literally found enough window panes to do all that. Another interesting thing, all the windows had weights and ropes that facilitated the movement of the windows. The construction people originally said, let's just put the windows in, the house is going to be air conditioned, so there is no need to go to the expense of going out and finding weights and ropes and having all the windows so they can open. And this was particularly true in the attic where the, what do you call it, the steeple?

Tom: The turret?

John: The turret or copula that was surrounded by these windows. I can remember going down to junk dealers in South Phoenix and finding the right weights to literally rebuild those so they operated just the way they did originally. So we were very meticulous in how we wanted everything to be just the way it had been done in 1895.

35:33

Tom: Anything special about the bathtub? That looks kind of. . .

John: Yes. Now the bathtub was another story. The Junior League ladies had located an old metal bathtub that they wanted to install in the one bathroom. But we knew from diaries from Whitelaw Reid that they had an oak rimmed, porcelain tub. This one summer, I had had a fellow come in and ask for a job. He was from California, he knew we were restoring this old house, and he asked if I would hire him to work on it a while. We had hired another fellow named Ron Stevens who worked with Jim Heiden. Ron Stevens had been a Navy veteran in World War II, but he had a big drinking problem so it was tough to keep him on the job, but he was very meticulous and he is the one that would remove all the paint from the mantels. He was just a great handyman for our main carpenter, Jim Heiden. It took him three weeks to remove the paint from the elaborate fireplace mantel in the dining room of the house. Three weeks to carefully remove the paint because of the complex construction of that mantel. Back to the bathroom, this one fellow I had working on it just because he wanted some summer work, he told me one day that a friend of his in California had found an old oak rimmed tub. Without the oak rim, but it was designed to have that oak rim on it. He had located on in this California town, and so I dispatched him in his pickup truck. It cost me a couple of hundred dollars to buy that tub, but he brought it back. Again, I want to one of the sash and door companies, and I would just beg like I did for all of the other materials if they would design and recreate and replicate those details. [Insert by Tom. One day in 2012 this same man took a tour and told me how his friend told him about the tub and when he got to San Diego to pick it up, it was in a house being taken down. The owner told him that he could have it if he could get it out, but the only way he could get it out was to take the house down around it! So it took him more time and effort than he had hoped.]

38:55

So it was just story after story. But by this time the Junior League people were getting so involved that they were looking at somebody who would donate the stove that was in the upper back bedroom that we figured was a maid's room. Another recollection was that knowing that we had to put air conditioning in, the engineers had said that it would be much more cost efficient to lower the ceilings in the hallways. At that time the house had been designed with rather high ceilings. They said, all they had to do was drop the ceilings in all the hallways to take care of the air conditioning vents. And I said, oh gosh, I really hate to change that look. So the engineers figured out a way to do the vents without lowering the ceilings. Again, more engineering, more cost, but we wanted everything to look like it was built in 1895.

Tom: Two questions about that. One was the floors on the first floor. It must have been great when somebody took all those layers of linoleum off and found that.

John: Well, it wasn't just that they had been completely protected by linoleum. In fact the living room, I don't particularly recall that there was linoleum.

Tom: Linoleum on it.

John: linoleum on it, but there had been so much wear and tear that you could hardly see the design in the wood. It wasn't until Jim Heiden took a sander and. I can remember the day he started sanding the floor in the living room and the beautiful pattern just came alive right there before my eyes. And that was true in all the rooms. Whether they had been covered over with linoleum or not they had had so much wear, tear, dirt, and grim that they had to be completely sanded and then they looked just like new. And that is one of the great features of the house. You know that in the back room, in the, going onto the back porch, we redeveloped as Dr. Rosson's office. That room had remnants around the edge of that wooden floor of all the trim in three other areas because there was distinctive wood patterns. Another interesting feature is that we believe those floors have been imported from the Midwest. The company, what is the famous wax company?

Tom: Johnson Wax?

43:00

John: Johnson Wax. That the heirs of the Johnson Wax fortune, we believe they were imported from the Johnson Wax people in the Midwest. Of course the big window in the living room, with the beautiful beveled edge. We know that was brought in on the railroad and of course transported in the mid-1890s and installed there. We were so careful with that window that we literally installed a ...

Tom: Was it Plexiglass?

John: Plexiglass to make sure nothing ever happened to that unique beveled edge window.

Tom: Yeah, it is a big one.

John: Of course it was interesting how the door bell. We knew they had a door bell, and knew there was a bell in the hallway next to the kitchen, between the kitchen and the dining room. But we also knew there had been a bell up in the master bedroom. The only reason we found that out was when the plastering company that came in to do all the plastering they found sets of wires that went all the way up to that master bedroom. Then we found the batteries under the floor. And we had an old fashioned electrical switch. When the switch was in the down position the bell would ring in the hallway by the kitchen, but at night they would switch it so the bell would ring in the upper master bedroom. That was just discovered by the plasterer, who fortunately called the electric, Cannon and Wendt people, to come I, and they figured it out. I think there was not still a bell in the bedroom upstairs, but we just knew from the wiring, and this switch, the old fashioned switch that the doctor did not mind being disturbed during the night when the door bell rang.

46:18

Tom: John, you and your committee were you concerned only with the reconstruction of the house, or did you have any influence over the look, whether it be of the furnishings or what went where?

John: Other than the wallpaper, of course we were heavily involved in that because I had to keep raising the money to have that work done. But I can remember the weekends that the Junior League ladies and their husbands they would spend weekends carefully scraping off the wallpaper. Once we had that done, and in the one bedroom that still has original wallpaper of the period. Again one of the league members found in an old house magazine, some original wallpaper from the early 1900s that was advertised and fortunately, there were just enough rolls of that particular pattern so we bought that oatmeal paper for that bedroom on the north side of the house. Cause that was the only bedroom in the house that had not had original wallpaper. And of course, other features, like the closets. I can remember there was a lot of controversy about the stairway to the attic, and how that had been done. Again it was highly debated how we finished off the top of that entrance to that stairway, and how we replicated the door. I guess you would call it a trap door. Going up to the attic you literally had to push the door. They covered that whole area so that people had access to the attic. Another feature was what we did in the attic. Would we air condition it? I decided yes, we would air condition it because it was such a unique feature because it had been reported that they had used the attic as a ballroom for parties. Of course, that was the frequent access to the turret or the little room with all the windows where Mrs. Rosson could go up and maybe look over the whole neighborhood to look to see if maybe Dr. Rosson's carriage was on the way home. We also decided to carefully replicate the low voltage wiring. We found all the old type of wiring and the instillation and the insulators. So we had 12 volt wiring in the attic. We decided to make a feature of the attic and have it furnished like it would have been in the early days. For a number of years, after we had opened the house in 1980, we allowed school groups and all the visitors to go up into the attic and see that. That was a big feature, until the fire marshal of the city decided that we should not have access to the top. We were always very careful in having only a few students up there at a time, but another decision we made early on was to have a fire suppression system over the whole house so that the whole house was fire proof with sprinklers throughout. We felt that code permitted enough visitation. Whenever I could and I was ever down there when a school group was there I would ask the school group what part of the Rosson House they liked the best. The school group in unison and in a loud chorus "The Attic!" There are so few attics in the Phoenix area that would look like an eastern attic with the old trunks and storage. But it was fun to furnish it just the way it might have been in 1895.

52:20

Tom: OK, so now it is 1980. The restoration is complete on the Square. What role did you assume then?

John: Well, I can remember. . . Oh. I have not talked about the exterior paint.

Tom: Yes, I would love to know how they got that off.

John: We knew from photographs that the house had not been painted white until into the '20s. We just did not know how to do it, and we asked a lot of experts to see how we might remove the paint. The conclusion was that we could not do it. It might destroy the brick. So we decided to paint the exterior sort of a Victorian red that was typical of some of the early Victorian houses. So we painted the house and we were getting ready for the opening of the house in 1979. One day a guy came into my office at Western Savings, and said, Say, I understand that you are

involved in that restoration of that Rosson House downtown. I said yes. He said, you know that would look so much better if it just, rather than painted that red, if it just had the original brick. And he says, I know a process, in fact I worked for a company in St. Louis that has a special chemical designed to remove paint from historic houses. I would be will to, if you pay me, I will show you how you can remove the paint off that building. I was intrigued enough by that that I got my architects and Jim Garrison and we all met this fellow. He said he would get a sample of the material from this company. The name of the company was the PROSOCO Corporation in St. Louis. I said go ahead and get the materials and I will pay you. In fact I said it works, I will hire you. . . He said if you hire me, he was somewhat transient. He said my wife and family, we'll just. It might take a year to do it the right way. I remember the day we came down here. He had his samples, and with the help of Jim Garrison representing the State Historic Preservation Office, we picked a section of the paint which is the exterior of the eastern part of the dining room, right just opposite the porch where we have that handicap special elevator?

Tom: Yes.

56:19

John: That was the section. We decided to take that whole section under the window of the dining room there opposite the porch, the side porch. We literally watched him apply the process. He had his spray gun and generator. He said it will take several applications. We have to put it on, and then we wait a couple of days and then we wash it off. There was some time period, I don't actually remember exactly. But we decided we would have him do his whole job on that section. And he did, and he removed all the paint, and then we waited for about three weeks, before we did the scientific testing to see if there had been any deterioration of the brick or the plaster. And it passed the test. There was no deterioration. So, that was when I had to make the agonizing decision, because he said to do the whole house. And we had already completely finished and had painted and the wallpaper and the mantels and everything, and all the inside windows were carefully restored. He said chances are you will have considerable around all of the windows because of the intensity and the pressure of the spray gun to remove this chemical that he would paint on the brick. And he said it will take at least nine months to do it. So it was a decision. Oh, and he also said it would probably cost about between \$25,000 and \$50,000 to do it.

Tom: A little surprise there at the end.

John: So that was a huge decision. And again I discussed with my brother and said is there anyway we can get another contribution from the company to do this?

59:04

Tom: (Interruption from outside.)

59:30

John: So we did it.

Tom: Did it take the full nine months?

John: Yes, it took almost a year. Because we had to go back in and correct all the damage and refinish all the wood and the mantels in the house.

Tom: So it did leak where the windows are.

John: Oh yeah. So it delayed the opening for a full year.

Tom: Well it looks good.

John: Well it looks the way it did.

Tom: So I bet you are glad it is done.

John: Well it was so important. Now the Square looks consistent and everything just like it is in step back in time. Just like they promote.

Tom: Well it gets lots of compliments so we are glad for the work that you did.

1:00:32

John: And I am trying to think of other.... Oh, and arriving at the colors for all ceilings in the house, the metal ceilings? We decided to check the paint on those ceilings. We took chips off every ceiling and sent them to a laboratory in Denver where they analyzed the chips and told up what the original color was for each room. We had to then remove the paint from all the ceilings and then paint them the original color. Of course, all the woodwork in the house, the sliding doors between the living room and the dining room, the front parlor or whatever it is called. Because that had been made a permanent wall, those sliding doors throughout all the years since it had been converted to a rooming house with all the different apartments, those sliding doors had been saved in their pockets. The hardware and everything. We pulled the door out and I took several of the pieces of the door. All this was with the help of Sundt Construction and the supervisors and all. We sent that up to the Fuller Paint Company in San Francisco to analyze it, and they determined that that finish on those doors was the original finish. So that is when we stripped all the woodwork through out the whole house and restored it to that original finish.

Tom: We get a lot of people come through who are living in a similar type house or an old house. It does not matter the floor plan, but it is an old house. And when we tell them all the work that went into it, and how exciting it was to find an original door, a pocket door and the story behind it, now we know what it was like, they are envious and wish they had the backing and so many people to do the work they are now having to do on their own home. It was a great find.

John: Well, there were other things we found. Of course, we found a lot of archaeological evidence. We found an old, what do you call it, not a septic tank. We found in a, literally a brick cistern, we found incredible amounts of old pottery. It had just been used as a waste dump. A cistern. I am not sure just.

Tom: A well of some kind.

John: Yes, a well. That they had used. And then underneath the back porch, buried in the dirt, we pulled out a whole Sunday edition of the *Los Angeles Times* from 1914.

Tom: Wow. How does that happen?

John: How that was preserved all that time was just incredible. So,

1:05:00

Tom: How did it get lost there, first of all. Then how did it get preserved.

John: 1914. A newspaper. Well they had better newsprint in those days. Another thing. You know the drainpipes from the outside?

Tom: Yeah.

John: Originally, the construction people had just had those replicated from plain metal. But we knew from the original, from some that had been good enough to be left there, that they had originally been made with rivets and not just big, long lengths of sheet metal. So I said take them down and get them rebuild to be like those original ones like a straw, with the rivets, circulating all the way down the pipe. Just another effort for authenticity. Of course we had to replace one whole fireplace over the front parlor. It was one of these tall, exterior, brick chimneys on the top of the house. Rather than just cap it off or something, we rebuilt it. The shingles. That was another story. We wanted to replicate a unique metal shingle, that were decorative over, or under, all the gables. So we tracked that down and we found a company in Connecticut that was able to replicate those metal, whatever I don't know what we called them. They were just the metal decorative shingles. We learned that was the same company that supplied them originally. And then we had to replicate of course the railings around the, over the porches.

Tom: The second floor or the first floor?

John: The second floor. Where you can literally walk out on the roof. On the porches. We located an outfit in New Orleans that recast all of that metal work. The spindles, and all that decorative New Orleans looking metal work on the porches. Just detail after detail.

(John's phone ringing)

John: Well, lets see, can you think of anything else that comes to your mind?

1:09:07

Tom: Well, nothing specific. We covered it with a nice broad brush, and we do some of the records, but it is good to hear the personal stories. It seems to me that with all the personal connections that you made you should have run for mayor again. Because now you knew all these people.

John: Laughs. Well, of course, it was exciting during those days, because they were doing the excavation of that block to the north. That is where they uncovered all of those pit houses. That entire block. When I think now what we could have had, if we would have persevered all of those pit houses on that block it would have been incredible archaeological treasure and a huge tourist event.

Tom: Yeah. It would have been nice big square. And all the houses they uncovered. Y. T. what's his name, Yours Truly Smith, who had his house right across the street over here. And the others that were here that they had laid out. The archaeological record is quite fascinating as well.

John: Fortunately, I took. We had a City photographer at the time named All Ruland (Spelling?) and I've got, to this day, I probably ought to bring, just in case you don't have slides like I ought to bring all that stuff down and have you take a look at it.

Tom: Yeah. Make copies of things.

John: I took all kinds of slides, 35 millimeter pictures of that archaeological work. Of course, once they had documented everything, and just hundred of boxes of artifacts, which they took to ASU and they are stored away somewhere. And another interesting feature, is that the next two blocks, going westward, were slated to be used for a, in fact even the block north, was all slated to be a trade center. A four story trade center, stretching from Seventh Street to Third Street. It would have blocked off the whole look down Sixth Avenue to Phoenix Union. It would have blocked that off. I used all the influence I could and helped rally a lot of opposition to that trade center. It ultimately it was abandoned. Otherwise we would have had that huge, big four story barrier between us and Van Buren that would have greatly and adversely affected us and the whole image of the Square.

1:12:48

Tom: Right. People frequent say they have driven past it, and they saw it, but they didn't know what it was. Then they finally stop in.

John: Of course then we have the development of the Mercado, and that evolution that didn't work as a retail shopping area. That of course now it is ASU.

Tom: Well very good. Thank you for this, talking with you, Mayor John Driggs. What is today's date, the 22nd, 23rd? The 23rd of July. We thank you for your time again and adding to the story of the restoration of the Rosson House.

John: Well, we might come back sometime and talk about all of the issues involved with saving the bungalows and the duplex. That is still another story.

Tom: I would like that. We have some interesting pictures about how all those were taken.

John: So where you have some good questions and I will reflect on it. I may even remember a few things I have forgotten about the Rosson House. For example, in the whole foyer of the

Rosson House, and that whole section of bench right there at the base of the stairway? We, that had all been stained with this dark stain. But on the inside of the door, the little cubbyhole area under the stairway, when we discovered that they had literally had a pattern of wood, in that wood. We decided that it would be nice to replicate that so we had a painter. And it wasn't just the natural wood, it was a simulated wood pattern that had been painted on the back of that door. So we had that simulated on the outside.

1:15:30

Tom: Inside that closet did you find any pictures or writing. There seems to be something on the walls.

John: No, I don't recall that. But a lot of things were found. Oh, I took great care in making care that the toilet in the Rosson House on the second floor was exactly restored to a functioning toilet. That was the stipulation to J. H. Welch that they plumb it so that the plumbing worked. And the same thing on the two sinks. The little corner sinks in the two bedrooms upstairs? I insisted that those be functioning sinks. And they functioned for twenty years. I don't think they function now.

Tom: No. I think the water has been turned off.

John: Right. But I had a lot of fun. Every tour I took I would turn the water on in the porcelain tub with the oak rim, and I would pull the chain and flush the toilet that had the overhead reservoir of water. So just tried to be very meticulous and I also wanted. How many of those gib doors do we have, is it eight or nine?

Tom: I think it is nine.

John: Nine of those gib window- doors. And I always enjoyed showing how they all worked. In every room. I don't know if they demonstrate that today.

Tom: Frequently. Most of the docents will go out on the kitchen onto the back porch to exit the tour.

John: So, again. It took a lot of time from when we started in 1975 until we opened in 1980. And I will always remember coming down with my wife and kids on the Saturday morning that we were going to have the dedication of the Rosson House and I just wondered if anybody would show up. We came on Washington Street. And I turned the block and there must have been 1,000 people on the block. It was almost shoulder to shoulder that had come to witness the dedication of the Rosson House, including the, I believe two daughters of the original Rosson girls. The original Rosson girls. I can remember talking on the phone to one of the original Rosson daughters before she died. So that was kind of exciting. So with that recollection I will sit back.

Tom: Alright. I will give you a couple of weeks and call and we will talk about the bungalows. Thank you, sir.

1:19:18